

AUGUST 2009

THANKS TO EVERYONE

WILL VAN ZEE DID THE STENCIL ON THE COVER

BRAD MORSE DID ALL THE DRAWINGS INSIDE

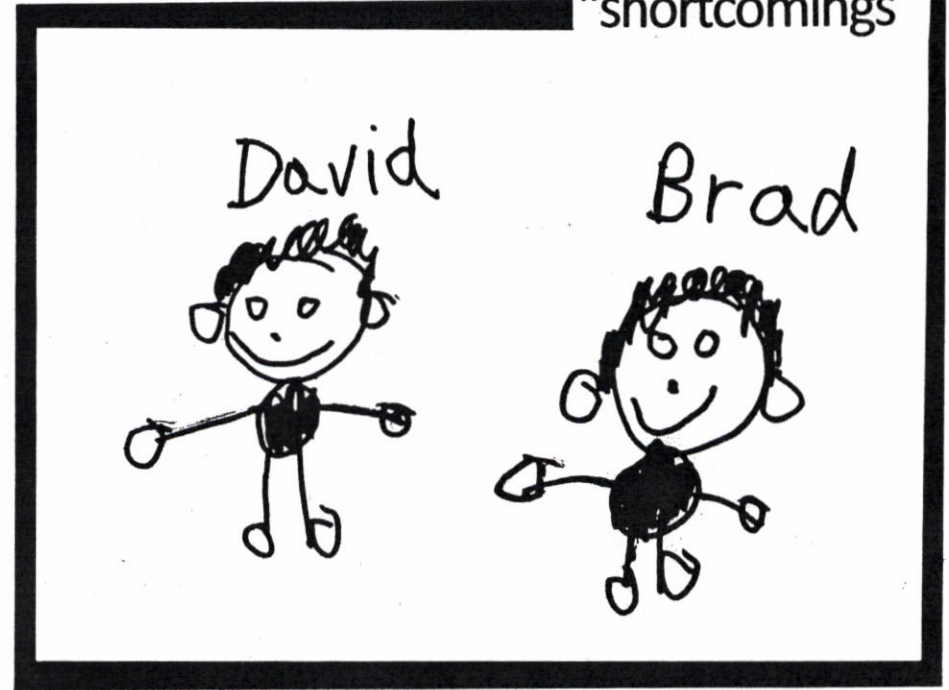
PLEASE WRITE FOR A MAILING ADDRESS — MOSHFORJESUS@GMAIL.COM

(TO BE CLEAR, MY EMAIL ADDRESS IS A DILLINGER FOUR SONG.

IN NO WAY DO I ADVOCATE MOSHING FOR JESUS. YOU CAN DO IT
IF YOU WANT, AND I WILL TRY NOT TO JUDGE YOU, BUT PERSONALLY
I THINK THAT IS PRETTY LAME)

TRAINWRECK

"shortcomings"



Best Borthner forever

Okay, so I dropped out of school and moved back in with my parents to save up money for my next move. To combat boredom, I started a band with Jo and Dustin, even wrote a bunch of songs. But they got too long and drawn out. Lost. Their structure, and then their rhythm. They sounded more like stories than Blatz. They were useless. But I decided to release them anyway. Pressed them on paper instead of vinyl. So this might look like the new issue of Trainwreck, but really it's our band's new record. I think it's a thrash record. Eight songs, one 7": not bad, unless you're Assholeparade. But wait, is it emo? So many love songs. Except they're all about a boy with Down Syndrome, not girls. Oh shit. Maybe it is a new issue of Trainwreck...

-Dave Brainwrecked

A couple weeks later, my mom is dying my hair green in the laundry room when I hear Brad start to throw up. I jump up and run into the living room, where he is sprawled across the couch, pawing at his mouth as yellow bile drops to the carpet. I grab a bowl and hold it in front of him, rubbing his back. When he finishes, he turns to me and puts on his heart-breaking face.

"Coco, I'm sick," he says. "You kissed me." And it's true. We were having a beautiful morning together, three days before. Dancing in the kitchen, we waltzed outside to pick raspberries from my mom's garden. All of a sudden, I was overcome with nausea, and couldn't even make it back to the house before I had to kneel down in the bushes and puke. We had so many plans together that day. Despite his concern, it's like I said. He can't understand when stuff comes up. I felt terrible, but as soon as I got better we drove to Walgreen's and I let him pick out my hair dye. He was so excited for my hair to turn green. Then he did.

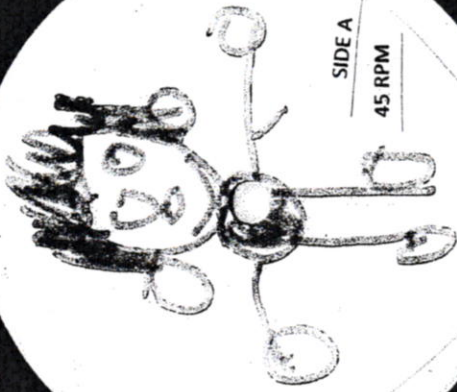
with my business. Get wrapped up in activities and working while he sits at home all day, watching television, wondering when we're going to leave.

Even if I don't remember the promise, the minute I walk in I know I've broken it. It's the only time I ever see this look on his face. He glances at me and furrows his brow. Crosses his legs, rocks back and forth, tries to concentrate on the TV. I start to make food and catch him looking back at me. My heart sinks, because now I've caught his expression. He doesn't know how to mask it; it's Brad, all he can be is honest. And all he will do is sit there for hours on end, disappointed. My mom will comment, "Brad's been grumpy tonight," but nothing more, because he's kept silent. He would never speak badly about me.

It's this gift I have, this acute ability to read him, let him speak to me without any words. Since his biggest struggle is with communicating, it's made all the difference. It's given me some of my favorite silence, even if it was only for a few seconds. Also some of the worst nights of my life. Even if it was only one look.

1. SUBURBAN HOME

2. WHY I CAN'T WRITE SONGS



SIDE A

45 RPM

3. HAMMERING MAN

4. SWEDISH PUNK

1. SUBURBAN HOME (originally by the Descendents)

No punk likes breaking their hard-fought code of ethics. But my little brother is even more stubborn, and every day he asks me to take him out for a cookie and milk at the local coffee shop. Since we're in the suburbs, the only coffee shops are Starbucks. So here I am, once again facilitating cash deposits to the bane of my existence. As if Starbucks wasn't bad enough, we can't even pay with cash. My mom has asked me to help Brad learn to use his debit card. His fingers are clumsy with coins, and bills get counted slowly, if at all. At seventeen, it's time to introduce yet another measure in the march towards autonomy. So Bank of America gets a small take of our time together too.

Sometimes it's a trade-off. Negating one un-punk activity by doing another. To keep him from sitting in front of the TV all day, inactive and helping Disney rake in ad revenue, I kidnap him and take him neat places. The other day I took him to the woods near our house, the ones he'd never been there before. We sat on all the benches and he pointed out every bird we saw. So today, he takes me to his woods, the bushes behind our house. He calls it "the forest." I've been here for years. It is probably the coolest place I've ever been to.

boys are all sitting up on their armrests. One man is sprawled across the aisle, blocking the way. Anna stops. "Hello boys," she says with a firm smile. Everyone quiets down and falls to the side. Of course, she didn't need my help all along. Anna passes through and into the bathroom, leaving me alone with our enemy. But he just nods at me, and I watch the door, waiting for Anna.

Back in our seats, we resume my German lessons.

"Ichbinzer...frodich...kenenchulernen," I manage.

"Pleased to know you," she smiles. "Very good, David."

7. SHORTCOMINGS

It's never intentional. Brad's memory is just too good. So when he asks if we can go to Starbucks tomorrow, I tell him yeah, of course. Then the next day I don't think about it, he doesn't say anything, and I leave without him. Carry on

"It is so much fun!" she cries. "I wish I'd brought pictures to show you. No one ever believes me." It's so obvious she is telling the truth. Of course I believe her.

I'd planned to sleep all night, but at three AM we are sharing her peanut butter and pickle sandwich as she teaches me German phrases. She speaks so softly that sometimes it's hard to hear her over the boys in back who grow louder as they pass around a bottle. The driver even pulls over to kick one off, but sadly it's not the gun-toting maniac, whose voice I can pick out above all the rest.

"When's the next stop?" Anna asks, glancing around. She leans forward, wringing her hands in her lap. Not for an hour, I tell her. "I can hold it until then," she says. But five minutes later, she is glancing over her shoulder again. The boys are still at it, cursing and drinking up a storm. All the lights are off, so all we get are the voices.

"I don't think I can hold it," she says. "But I'm scared to go back there." I've spent the last four hours growing in awe of Anna, her unbelievable strength and bravery, and she is also scared of the same guy. It's sad, but kind of comforting. I propose a plan: I'll walk back with her, as if I'm going to use the bathroom. Once done and on her way back, I'll head in and wash my hands. She nods. We get up and start the slow procession towards the bathroom. The

He walks so slowly we have to drive everywhere, even just to go on a walk. I know, driving, not punk. In the car, I pop in *Ballot Results*. Now we are a Minutemen cover band. Brad air drums and I multi-task: guitar, vocals, and steering. Trying to do D. Boon justice without crashing my mom's minivan. The whole charade makes for lots of craned necks in the other cars. We've gotten used to the weird looks. Cause here in the suburbs, I've never fit in less. Not since middle school, at least. And my stupid "shocking" haircut serves its purpose here, not just a fucking cliché like it is in the cities. And this week's color? Yeah, Brad picked it out at the neighborhood Walgreens.

So only a year after I escaped, I'm stuck here again. As much as I sneer, as I spit on the Starbucks, the yuppies, the streets with no sidewalks, the surfeit and complacency...it's not all bad. My brother just finished his cookie, his simple daily pleasure. Now it's time for one of mine: holding his hand. Yeah, life is pretty sweet for a punk and a retard. We're standing on the sidewalk now. Kissing on the lips, riddled with dirty looks.

2. WHY I CAN'T WRITE SONGS

Like the rest of Capitol Hill, Seattle Central is under construction. I'd written the school off when I took classes there, but still, Erica and I scale the fences and duck into the bushes. So far, it beats Algebra. The more observant passersby hoot and holler, but the band drowns it out. Trespassing, finding new tattoos on an old flame, spitting up dirt: it is so close to a beautiful punk cliché. Then Sonic Youth finishes playing, the big shitty festival lets out, Erica leaves, and I walk by myself to the punk show.

A three-piece from Portland is playing when I walk in, primal and almost Hickey-like. Not the band, just the percussion, but that's all I can pay attention to. After they finish, I head outside. I run into Josefina, in town for the week, who already seems to have more friends here than me. I stay outside during the next band, who fail to impress. The sidewalk is crowded during their set. Everyone's waiting for the last band.

"No, they're not playing anymore," Jo announces. "Or that's what the drummer said. He just passed out in the van."

"I'll drum," I offer. It's a joke. I can't drum for the life of me.

6. FURCHT

The guy who makes me promise to sit next to him on the bus tells me why he is leaving Sacramento.

"Man, I just got out of fucking jail," he says. "Spent a day in holding for pulling a gun on a security guard. But my lawyer got me off the hook. Ha!"

I excuse myself and hide around the corner until everyone lines up to leave. I get on last, and take the worst seat, right up front by the driver. Charlton Heston is in back, near the bathroom. I am safe.

In Oroville, the driver helps an old woman into the seat next to me. She tells me her name, Anna, and starts to cry. She is going to Portland to visit her sister-in-law in the hospital. "We are so close," she tells me. "I don't think there's much time left." Her husband is gone too, and her sister-in-law their last living link. I'm not quite sure what to say, but after a minute she dries her eyes and changes the topic.

Ten minutes later, she is the most interesting person I've met on my trip. Although she has an edge: at 83, she's had more time to rack up character than most. Plus she still sky dives, at least once a year.

times. I was sure I wouldn't finish. I did, but not in time to catch the last train to Connecticut. I'd have to make the first train in the morning. In the meantime, I found her.

She shook me awake in the middle of a great dream, but it was okay, because for once waking up was better. But there was no time, not even to make coffee. I was late to go roadie for my friend's pop-punk band. Sixteen-year-old me would've been stoked; for once, my life kinda looked like an Aaron Cometbus story. Only three years later, it still felt pretty right.

So I went on tour and caught a few more hours of sleep, but not many. As the train pulled into Grand Central, all I wanted was to crawl into bed. Except now, that included something—nay, someone—else. But she was nowhere to be found. Her disappearance wasn't without a trace. On my pillow were three hairs. Three different colors. All hers. Even a pair of pegged jeans underneath the bed.

I found her a few days later with a new guy she'd met at a show while I was away. He was older and had way more tattoos. Of course. Meanwhile, I read through the new issue. In the frenzied week before, I hadn't recognized a couple of the stories for the weak, unoriginal, worthless trash they were. That was the worst. I was so disappointed. I'd gotten caught up in it, and nothing had worked out the way it was supposed to. Oh, right—a fucking Cometbus story.

"Well the guitarist is missing too," Jo says. Great. Maybe I'm drunk, but the band inside is starting to sound like Speaker Speaker. And now that Nobunny aren't playing, again, they're now the headliners. Great. Still, the "DIY" promoter won't cross Nobunny off the line-up sheet at the front door, of course. And by now Liza is swaying around, drunk and belligerent. Of course. She marches up and digs a finger square in my chest.

"Look at you Dave," she sneers. "Hopping trains and shit." Pretty confusing, because I am just standing around. I ask what she's talking about, but she interrupts me. "Like you're not even from the eastside," she smiles. Little black clouds of suburban guilt accumulate over my head as her friends stare, waiting for my response.

"Wait, I've never even hopped a train," I say.

"Oh," she replies, and wanders off. But she still has a point. I'm a leper, I'm suburban, which means no one else is headed that way after the show. Ironic, because now I have to hitchhike home. I walk down Eastlake to the on-ramp. Alex rides by on his bike. He doesn't recognize me, just smiles and high fives my outstretched arm. Soon a truck pulls over.

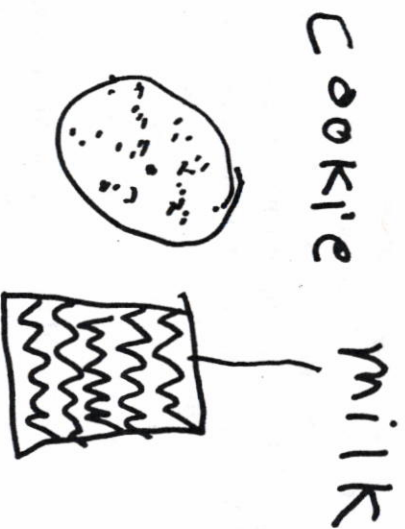
"I used to hitchhike all the time," Sarah says as she drives. "But the furthest I'd ever go was Coeur D'Alene." She

5. LETTER TO JO

is taking me halfway there, since she's going out towards the plateau.

"I was in Coeur D'Alene earlier today, you know," I tell her. The first two days there were pretty miserable, but as always, Idaho won me over. In a pawnshop the day before, I found a leather jacket for only thirty-five bucks, a once in a lifetime deal. Only in Wallace.

Sarah drops me at the on-ramp, where another pickup truck takes me all the way to my house. Before I go to bed I try the leather jacket on again. The sleeves are a little long, the torso a bit wide. It's too big, and I laugh. It doesn't fit. How fitting.



I worked on the new issue every day trying to finish before tour. The library closed at 11, so I'd walk home and rest for twenty minutes before working all night. Four sentences in, she'd knock on the door. Yeah, her. You know the one. God had picked the worst week to start answering old prayers.

I tried to type up my pages of stories but she'd sit on the bed playing the same two riffs, over and over again, clumsier and clumsier, so I stopped to teach her one more. Then another. We stayed up all night laughing. When the sun came up, we squinted, shrugged, and went to buy beer. Back in my room I put on the first Ringers album. She bowled me over with a kiss. Then my roommate walked in to brush his teeth and stopped the morning surprise. She even snored worse than I did. Like I told you, the punk girl of my dreams. She left to go film skateboarders all day. I woke up and got back to work.

By Thursday I was exhausted, but the issue was finally written. Problem was, I had four hours left to make free copies. I threw out all the old ideas and laid the entire issue out with just the printed stories and my shoes. I hopped around the tiny office with one shoe on, dripping sweat on the Xerox screen and photocopying my shoelace a thousand

3. HAMMERING MAN

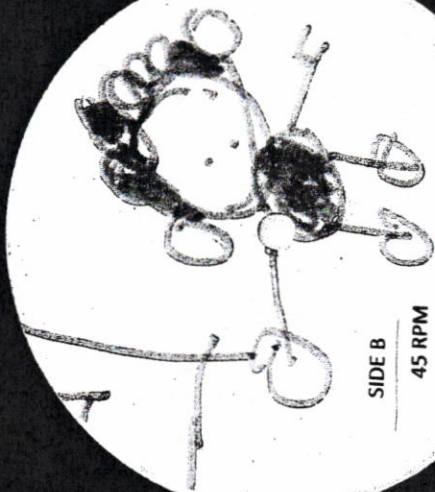
As long as my eyes are closed, it's enjoyable. But when I open them, it's all I can do not to stand up and leave. In front of me, Steve E. Nix and the Cute Lepers are rocking out like the Chuck E. Cheese house band. The girls sing back up off to the side, swiveling hips into their tambourines, all part of the act, slick and choreographed. Mechanical. Steve himself keeps cocking his head at the same two angles. Gone, I suppose, are the days of his old rebel yell:

"Pogo, you fuckers!"

The place is packed. We're all seated in folding chairs the Seattle Art Museum has set up. The more animated among us sway from side to side. Everyone taps a foot along with the music. Me too, I can't help it. These songs are really good. But the only guy dancing is standing outside on the sidewalk. He keeps doing the same move, over and over again. Right palm out, raising his left hand up, then down. Up, then down. Hammering nothing.

5. LETTER TO JO

6. FURCHT



SIDE B
45 RPM

7. SHORTCOMINGS

8. WHAT GOES AROUND

4. SWEDISH PUNK

I wish it could all be Swedish punk. Tight. Spastic.

Sophisticated. Patterned sonic booms with smart accents, and we're still just on the music. Then comes all the magic and serendipity that usually escapes me in punk. Like once, in Budapest, I got tired of looking for my brother at a bar. There were four stories and about three lights in the whole place, so I sat in the corner waiting for him to walk past. I could barely make out faces, and felt a little hopeless for a minute. Somehow, Britta read the writing on my shirt.

"Masshysteri?" she asked, pointing at me. She pulled at her long blonde hair and started to shoot off about Umeå. I knew I liked her when she said she thought Dennis Lyxzén seemed like kind of an asshole. And she knew where my brother was. Turned out they were good friends. Then she left, but if you go to that bar, our portraits of each other are still there. Next to each other on the wall, drawn in black marker, mostly lost to the shadows.

Later, in San Francisco, a mood creeps over me with the fog. I'm starting to get word of all the people double-crossing me back home and trying to forget about it, but my friends here have all flaked on me. I sit at the BART station and try to read when a woman approaches me. She isn't Swedish.

She's San Franciscan, which means she only wants to take a picture of me for her blog.

"I post pictures of people reading," she tells me. I say that's kind of funny, and she laughs, so I think she missed my point because I want to scream. Luckily Brandt scoops me up and takes me to a show in the Mission. And who else is playing but Skidkids, two nights before they fly back to Sweden. It is pure Ragnarok. Many live their whole lives without witnessing such carnage, and the quivering beast with the microphone even smiles after their set, walking off the stage.

The next day I see them again. Not at a show, but browsing in a bookstore. A longtime fantasy of mine, shopping for books with a hardcore band. They don't speak much English, so our book talk is spare and deliberate. When Loffe can't find the book he wants, I direct him to Modern Times, which does have it. Again, he smiles as he walks out, this time at me.

It's hard to explain, this tinny energy built into Swedish punk, slamming me against the walls, until I'm laughing and crying and praying all at the same time, three things I never do. Making the punk at home feel limp and sterile by comparison, which feels so backwards, until I think back and realize my Swedish roots go back further than my

American ones. And do I have punk roots too, or are those the blossoms?